

**California Department of Fish and Game Black Bear Management Program**  
**<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hunting/bear/statewidepolicy.html>**

**Department's Statewide Black Bear Policy 2071**

Consistent with sections 1801, 4181 and 4181.1 of the Fish and Game Code, the goal of the statewide black bear policy is to minimize damage to private property, without posing a threat to local bear populations. This policy is intended to address situations where bears have entered residential areas to minimize bear/human conflicts. Bears which are threats to public safety, as determined by a public safety officer or Department employee, may be killed at any time without a permit. The specific procedures for handling public safety bears are detailed in the Department's "Wildlife Safety Policy."

The Department recognizes that the improper storage of human foods and garbage is the primary factor leading to bear/human conflicts. The reduction or elimination of bear attractants is therefore emphasized throughout this policy so that bears do not become habituated to human food and become problem bears in the future. This policy is intended to reduce the number of bear/human conflicts to the benefit of individual bears and people living or recreating in bear habitat.

**I. Incident Response**

A. Regional personnel will attempt to respond to all bear incidents, either by phone or in person. The type and level of response should be consistent with the reported incident. The Department employee receiving the report of a bear incident is responsible for insuring that the incident is reported to an appropriate Department employee.

B. The responsible Department employee, under the authority of the regional manager or his/her designee, will verify the validity of the complaint, determine the appropriate action, and if necessary, start control measures and/or issue a depredation permit pursuant to Section 401, Title 14, CCR.

C. Incident documentation will be made by the region when scene response to a bear call is necessary. This may include bear incident reports, depredation permits and follow-up or recurrence reports. Copies of this documentation shall be sent through the chain of command to region and Wildlife Programs Branch (WPB).

D. Under the conditions described in sections 4181 and/or 4181.1 of the Fish and Game Code, black bears that have damaged private property may be killed by the property owner or an agent (See II B and C). A depredation permit is not to be issued to kill a bear for public safety purposes. The procedures for disposing of bear taken under depredation permit will be determined prior to killing the bear. A Department employee will be responsible for disposal of, or to verify disposal of such bear.

E. Individual bears which stray into residential areas, or similar situations where human/bear conflicts are anticipated, may be moved to the nearest suitable habitat in the safest and most expedient manner. Bears which have become habituated to humans or human settlements are not candidates for moving. Removals will not be considered relocation for the purposes of this policy, since the purpose is to return such bears to the area they already inhabited.

F. Wildlife interests will be given priority over private interests on public lands.

## **II. Response Categories and Remedial Actions**

A. Category 1 - A bear has strayed into a populated area and cannot readily return to bear habitat. In most situations, removal of the antagonists or distractions from the area will allow the bear to return to appropriate habitat and only phone contact will be necessary. Site response will only be necessary in cases where a bear does not leave or other factors indicate that either the safety of the bear or public are compromised. Techniques to remove the bear may include, but are not limited to the use of "bear busters" (rubber slug shot shells) or sling shot projectiles to drive the bear away and/or "bear" dogs to chase and haze the bear out of the area. Unless otherwise specified by a supervisor, a Department employee will accompany any persons using dogs to chase or haze bears. Tranquilizing and removing the bear can be used if other methods are determined to be unsafe or have been unsuccessful.

B. Category 2 - A bear has become habituated to humans and may be a nuisance problem (no property damage involved) by tipping over garbage cans, invading compost piles, walking across porches, etc. Bears which have been previously captured and returned to areas of human habitation are included in this category. The investigator should recommend reasonable corrective measures as a solution to the problem. Reasonable corrective measures shall include, but are not limited to: area clean-up, removal of trash or other food attractants, bear-proofing food storage areas, electric fencing, temporary closure of campsites, and/or the techniques listed in Category 1 above.

C. Category 3 - A bear has caused real property damage to a dwelling(s), structure(s), vehicle(s), apiaries, etc., or is a repeat offender (the bear has been previously captured or hazed by Department employees). If the damage is minor and there are no other previous reports of damage - the first action should be the implementation of reasonable corrective measures to remove the attractants as outlined for Category 2 bears. As the situation dictates, corrective measures shall be made prior to, or in addition to, issuing a depredation permit. In those cases where a bear has caused extensive and/or chronic damage to private property, such as livestock killed and/or injured, entries into a home(s) or cabin(s), repeated damage where corrective or bear-proofing efforts have failed, etc., the corrective action should be the issuance of a depredation permit.

As provided for in Section 4181.1 of the Fish and Game Code, land owners may kill a bear encountered in the act of molesting or injuring livestock as long as this taking is reported to the Department by the next working day. The carcass also must be made available for inspection. After investigation, and after the fact depredation permit can be issued, the Department employee has the option of allowing the landowner to retain the carcass.

### **III. Guidelines for Relocation, Removal, Trapping or Hazing of Bears**

A. For the purposes of this policy, relocation is defined as the capture and movement of a bear at least less 20 air miles, and preferably over 75 miles, from the capture site.

B. Trapping and relocating black bears should only be considered as an option in the most UNIQUE situations. Black bears shall only be relocated with the prior permission of the Deputy Director or his/her designee.

C. Only Department personnel are authorized to capture and relocate black bears. Personnel from federal, State and/or local agencies may not capture and relocate bears unless specific authorization for relocating black bears is contained in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Director of the Department and the appropriate agency. Any such MOU shall include directions for coordination of all trapping efforts on an incident-by-incident basis.

D. Any bear that is trapped and handled by the Department should be ear tagged prior to reintroduction to the wild. All "relocated" bears shall be ear tagged in accordance with Section 4190 of the Fish and Game Code and an Animal Immobilization Form, including the ear tag number, shall be completed for each captured bear. The immobilization form (or a copy) shall be forwarded to WPB. Captured bears being returned to their immediate habitat (not relocated) should be tagged when possible, however, if tagging equipment is not available and immediate release is necessary, the bear should be marked in some manner for future identification. Any tags recovered from bears taken under permit, or otherwise taken, shall be forwarded to WPB with any permits or other report.

E. Prior to trapping a black bear for relocation purposes, a release site shall be approved by the regional manager, or his/her designee. Release sites may be predesignated by the regional manager and the appropriate land management agency will be notified of the release sites. No bear shall be transported out of the State without the authorization of a deputy director (or his/her designee).

F. A depredation permit may be issued for any bear that has been relocated and subsequently meets the criteria of a Category 2.

#### **IV. Orphaned and Injured Bears**

A. On rare occasions, black bear cubs may be found orphaned. These animals are eligible for rehabilitation only if provisions have been made for the capture, transportation, care, and release of the animal before the cub is placed in captivity. Provisions are to include method of transport, timing of release, and financial resources for the capture, care and release of the animal, including Department costs. Deputy director (or his/her designee), approval is required prior to allowing an animal care facility to possess and/or "rehabilitate" a bear. For the purposes of this policy, a cub is defined as a bear weighing less than 50 pounds.

B. Except as provided for category 1, 2 and 3 situations listed above, bears should never be handled. In the case of injured bears, responding personnel should assess injuries and euthanize any bear with injuries that prevent it from surviving in the wild.

#### **V. Orphaned Black Bear Cub Rehabilitation Guidelines**

The following guidelines should be used to assist personnel in implementing the Black Bear Depredation Policy as it relates to rehabilitation of orphaned cubs

Selection Criteria - Cubs of the year may be candidates for rehabilitation if the following conditions are met:

1. There is a consensus between Department personnel in the region and the Wildlife Investigations Lab (WIL) Supervisor or his designee that a given cub is suitable for rehabilitation.
2. If consensus is not reached, the final decision about whether a cub meets these criteria will be made by the WIL Supervisor.
3. Orphaned cubs are encountered before August 1, when cubs are about six months old. After August 1, cubs of the year are usually capable of surviving on their own and should be evaluated as candidates for rehabilitation on a case-by-case basis.
4. Orphaned cubs have had little or no contact with humans. This means that the cubs have not imprinted on humans.

#### **Procedure-**

All orphaned cubs which are candidates for rehabilitation shall be transported to the WIL, the animals should be held in a secure container and kept in a quiet place with little or no human contact. The cub(s) should be given food and water as appropriate. It is unlawful for the public to pick up and possess wildlife (sections 2000 and 2002, Fish and Game Code).

All rehabilitated orphaned bear cubs shall be ear tagged by the rehabilitating facility prior to transportation for release into the wild. Marking of bear cubs is required by Section 4190 of the Fish and Game Code.

Rehabilitated cubs should be released in suitable habitat (near snow line is preferred) within 75 miles of the site where they were originally captured. The release site shall be coordinated with the land management agency. Release of rehabilitated orphaned cub(s) requires placing the animal(s) in natural or artificially constructed dens during the most appropriate time of late fall or winter. Den sites should not be disturbed after the cub(s) is placed in the den.

The release of a rehabilitated cub shall be supervised by Department personnel who should be prepared to address questions from the news media.

